McAllister: ACDV B50
Controversial Issues

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Professor, Reference Librarian
WHAT YOU NEED

4 sources on a controversial issue:
• 2 database articles
• 1 website
• 1 video debate

Equal balance of pro and con sources!
Controversial Issues: What a Vast Topic!!

You can choose any of these topics...

- Addiction
- Affordable Housing
- Black Lives Matter
- Capital Punishment
- Childcare
- Compensation for College Athletes
- DREAM Act
- Food Insecurity
- Fracking
- Gun Control
- Hybrid & Electric Cars
- Marijuana
- Minimum Wage
- Privacy & surveillance
- Racial Profiling
- Reducing Traffic Deaths
- Renewable Energy
- Same-Sex marriage
- Sentencing & Prison Reform
- Sharing Economy
- Social Media/Networking
- Sweatshops
- Water Pollution

...But that is still too big for a research paper topic!
What Makes a Good Topic for This Research Project?

• Focused and specific
• Asks a single question
• Can be answered with Yes or No
Brainstorm What You Know & Possible Subtopics

LGBT Rights (Topic)

- Employment
- Housing
- Parenting
- Adoption Rights
- Gay Marriage
- Reproductive Rights
- Schools
- Restrooms
- Military
- Transgender Rights
- Sex Reassignment Surgery

Subtopics
### Examples of How to Narrow a Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrow Topic By</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Specific</th>
<th>More Specific</th>
<th>Very Specific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>NBA</td>
<td>Changes in the NBA since the 1960s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Mammals</td>
<td>African mammals</td>
<td>Big cat mammals in Africa</td>
<td>The Cheetah’s future in Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Rock &amp; Roll</td>
<td>Early rock &amp; roll artists</td>
<td>Elvis Presley’s influence on rock &amp; roll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of study</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Development of antibiotics</td>
<td>Use of antibiotics in preventing Polio</td>
<td>Dr. Salk’s contribution to Polio prevention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that each broad topic is narrowed until a manageable research topic is clarified. The last column can be turned into your paper’s **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**.
Needs To Be a Yes/No Question

• Is this a Yes/No question?:
  • How can teenagers be persuaded to abstain from drinking?
  • Should alcohol advertising be allowed on television?
  • How can underage people get access to alcohol?
  • Which method works best to prevent drunk driving?
  • Is there peer pressure on teens to drink alcohol?
Time for Research!
What Are Databases?
What Are Databases?

• Databases are searchable collections of reliable, vetted resources, like encyclopedias, magazines, academic journals, and newspapers.

• Not part of the visible Internet—Google doesn’t have access to these articles.

• We pay for access to the servers that host the database search-engines.
How to Talk to Databases

• Find key words or phrases in your specific question.
  • A key word or phrase is the word or words that the question is about. They are the important words in the question.

• Example: Does someone’s poverty level affect their access to higher education?
  • What are the important words?

Does someone’s poverty level affect their access to higher education?
How to Talk to Databases

• Next you will develop a list of synonyms for these key words/ phrases.

• What are words we could use for higher education?

college, university, post-secondary education
Let’s See It In Action...

Keywords video
Getting to the Databases
Gale Opposing Viewpoints

You can type in your topic

You can search categories

You can Browse Issues
From Home

Use your BC @ number, without the @ symbol.

To the databases!
Internet Websites

Tip: Search your topic with site: .gov (or .edu, .org, etc.)

Example= Fracking site:.gov

Professor McAllister has green-lighted procon.org

All other websites must be evaluated!
Who Put the Information Out There, and Why Should You Believe Them?
Finding Video Debates

• Use IntelligenceSquared, YouTube, or PBS to find a video debate about your topic.
  www.intelligencesquaredus.org
  www.youtube.com
  www.pbs.org

• Search “[your topic here] debate”

• You can evaluate a video debate just like you would evaluate a website!
Give Credit Where Credit is Due! Those Weren’t Your Ideas!
How Will I Remember All This?! 

- Use the Library’s navigation bar to access our LibGuides.
- In the “Academic Development” drop-down folder find “ACDV B50: Contemporary Issues”
Now It’s Time to Narrow Down Your Topic!...

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1. Pick one of these topics that interest you, and put it in the middle of this mapping diagram. Then write down subtopics and narrow it down until you get a very specific topic. You can use CQResearcher or GovOpposingViewpoints to browse ideas.

2. Write down a single question about your very specific topic that can be answered Yes or No.

3. Circle the keywords in your question written above.

4. Write down each keyword circled, and then list after each keyword any synonyms for that word.